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SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR
DRL
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SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR
INR/IAA (BEN-YEHUDA)
TREASURY FOR MAUREEN WAFER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [HA](#)

SUBJECT: HAITIAN ID DISTRIBUTION UNDERWAY BUT HAPHAZARD

[1](#)1. Summary: Following many delays, MINUSTAH, the OAS, and the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) began distributing ID cards throughout Haiti December 2. The OAS plans to distribute all 3.5 million cards by December 31, but the process has started slowly and faced several obstacles. MINUSTAH said cards were being distributed at one center in Saint-Marc without a list assigning voters to their voting centers, but the OAS claims all the voters from that distribution center will vote in a single voting center. Distribution at large centers is chaotic. Because the OAS, MINUSTAH and CEP never created procedures for distributing cards, different centers use different techniques of varying efficiency. There is growing concern among Haitians and members of the international community observing the process that card distribution will not be completed before the first round on January 8, 2006. End Summary.

Delayed Distribution Started December 2

[1](#)2. After many logistical and technical delays that forced them to redesign the card-distribution plan, the OAS and MINUSTAH began December 2 to distribute ID cards throughout Haiti. Under the new plan, instead of distributing cards from voting centers, which would have forced anyone picking up their card to find out where to vote, the OAS is passing out cards at former registration centers. Workers place a sticker on the back of each card and hand-write the location of each voter's voting center. Because of delays receiving the stickers, the first registration centers opened in rural areas with only one voting center December 2. On December 4, the OAS used 100,000 stickers purchased locally to open four large distribution centers in Port-au-Prince. OAS elections chief Elizabeth Spehar reported that 1.5 million stickers arrived December 5 and that all distribution centers would be open on or shortly after December 8.

OAS: Slow Start does not Jeopardize December 31 Finish

[1](#)3. Spehar said the OAS could distribute almost all the 3.5 million ID cards by December 31, but distribution has been slow thus far. In order to distribute all the ID cards by the end of December, the OAS will have to distribute an average of 140,000 cards per day for the next 25 days, which Spehar says means distributors must average a maximum of four minutes per card. However, because the registration facilities vary widely in their ability to accommodate crowds, the OAS has given its employees flexibility organizing distribution. As a result, the process has started slowly and the OAS is not yet achieving its distribution goals.

Problems in Saint-Marc

[1](#)4. The Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) and MINUSTAH report that in Saint-Marc, a small town 45 miles north west of Port-au-Prince, ID card distribution began without a list assigning voters to their voting centers. MINUSTAH elections officials said that though voters are assigned to voting sites, the information was not delivered to the offices distributing cards. MINUSTAH field reports indicated that some areas in Grand-Anse might suffer from the same problem. The OAS insists that all of the voters receiving cards at the distribution center in question were assigned to the same voting center, so the distribution workers did not need a list. OAS staff report that the problem was that the voting center in question has four buildings, and the OAS staff distributing cards could not tell voters which building they should go to. They said that on election day it would be easy for voters to find their voting site because they will arrange the voting sites within the center alphabetically.

Large Centers Disorganized Inside and Out

15. The distribution process at large distribution centers is disorganized and chaotic. At Place Jeremie, just south of downtown Port-au-Prince, Poloff observed a crowd of 300 Haitians waiting in a disorderly line to pick up their cards.

(Note: The media reported that an elderly woman died of asphyxiation while attempting to retrieve her card. End Note)
Members of the HNP (3), electoral security guards (10) and UNPOL (1) worked to maintain calm and keep the crowd organized. However, the situation in the hot sun was somewhat strained; the security elements and the crowd yelled at each other intermittently and Poloff observed two members of the HNP using their shotguns to push back the crowd. Though they complained about the process, registrants said they planned to wait to get their cards and expressed hope that the process would become smoother in the coming days. In addition, the crowd allowed the UNOPS-trained guards, HNP, and UNPOL to make a priority line for older and handicapped registrants.

15. Inside the center, eight alphabetically organized tables were piled with boxes of cards and staffed by two or three workers each. Inside each box, the cards were grouped together in bundles with rubber bands. When a registrant presented his or her receipt, the workers at the table used their last name to select one or more bundles of cards, which they methodically sorted through. Once they found the correct card, the workers affixed a sticker to the card and wrote the location of the registrant's voting center. The registrant then signed, or if they could not write, made a fingerprint on a form indicating they had received their card. The whole process took between two minutes thirty seconds and twelve minutes.

Distribution Techniques Differ by Center

16. At other centers, OAS workers are using different procedures to distribute cards. Workers at the health clinic site at the National Palace had arranged their tables into stations. Voters stopped at one station to pick up their card, another to get their sticker and a final station to sign for their card. Meanwhile, PolLES reported that at his card distribution center, at the Prime Minister's office, he was told that different letters of the alphabet would be distributed on different days of the week, beginning with A, B and C on Mondays.

Increasing Concern that the OAS will not Finish

17. Some members of the CEP, MINUSTAH elections officials, and some members of the international community covering elections are concerned that the OAS will not finish card distribution on time, which could de-legitimize elections. In a meeting with the Charge December 5, CEP President Max Mathurin said he had written a letter expressing his concern about card distribution and production to MINUSTAH elections chief Gerard LeChevallier, which had gone unanswered. The Charge advised Mathurin to take his concerns to the PM and said post would similarly raise his concern with SRSG Valdes. MINUSTAH elections officials also expressed their concern to Poloff. They said that though the OAS plan appears functional on paper, the OAS is not organized enough on the ground to pull it off. Finally, a Canadian political officer voiced her concern to Poloff and suggested a meeting between MINUSTAH, the CEP, the OAS and some Friends of Haiti Ambassadors to try to get the three organizations to work together on card distribution.

December 31 Difficult to Call

18. Comment: OAS elections chief Elizabeth Spehar is well aware that the eyes of the international community are focused on card distribution, and that if she fails, she will likely be publicly blamed. OAS workers are still working out the kinks of plans for card distribution. Nonetheless, she insists that the OAS can finish card distribution in the allotted time without impacting the electoral calendar.

CARNEY